

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A server system, comprising:
one or more computers;
an application executing on the computers to receive and process client requests; and

a constraint system to constrain operation of the application according to multiple different constraints, the constraint system comprising a hierarchy of constraint layers, with each constraint layer containing a set of one or more constraints that customize operation of the application, wherein the constraint layers in the hierarchy have different respective priorities associated therewith,

wherein the constraint layers ~~are organized within the hierarchy~~ include each of the following, which are hierarchically arranged from highest priority to lowest priority:

a constraint layer that contains legally mandated constraints to constrain operation of application according to legal principles;

a constraint layer that contains company-mandated constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of a company that operates the application;

a constraint layer that contains customer constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of customers;

a constraint layer that contains cultural constraints to constrain operation of the application according to cultural aspects;

a constraint layer that contains end user constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of an end user,

wherein the constrain system is to provide a relation between a first constraint layer and a lower-priority second constraint layer such that the first constraint layer

precludes behavior defined by the second constraint layer if the behavior of the second constraint layer conflicts with behavior defined by the first constraint layer, but the second constraint layer does not constrain the first constraint layer, wherein the relation between the first constraint layer and the second constraint layer holds even when the first constraint layer is applied prior to the second constraint layer.

Claims 2-7: Canceled

8. (Previously Presented) A server system as recited in claim 1, further comprising a constraint resolver to resolve the constraint layers so that operation of the application is constrained by a sum of the constraints in the layers, wherein the constraint resolver is configured to reconcile any conflicts among constraints imposed by different constraint layers.

9. (Currently Amended) A server system comprising:
one or more computers; and
a multi-layer application executing on the computers to handle client requests, the multi-layer application comprising:
a problem-solving logic layer to process the client requests according to an associated problem domain, the problem-solving logic layer containing one or more execution models to perform various sets of tasks when processing the client requests, the problem-solving logic layer producing replies to the client requests;
a presentation layer to structure the replies produced by the problem-solving logic layer in a manner that makes the replies presentable on various client devices; and

a constraint hierarchy of multiple constraint layers, each constraint layer containing a set of one or more constraints that specify how the replies should be structured to customize the replies for specific sets of conditions, wherein the constraint layers in the hierarchy have different respective priorities associated therewith,

wherein the constraint layers ~~are organized within the hierarchy~~ include each of the following , which are hierarchically arranged from highest priority to lowest priority:

a constraint layer that contains legally mandated constraints that constrain the presentation layer to structure the replies to comply with certain legal principles;

a constraint layer that contains company-mandated constraints that constrain the presentation layer to structure the replies according to preferences of a company that operates the application;

a constraint layer that contains customer-oriented constraints that constrain the presentation layer to structure the replies according to preferences of customers;

a constraint layer that contains cultural constraints that constrain the presentation layer to structure the replies according to cultural aspects; and

a constraint layer that contains end user constraints that constrain the presentation layer to structure the replies according to preferences of end users, and

wherein the constrainers are to provide a relation between a first constraint layer and a lower-priority second constraint layer such that the first constraint layer precludes behavior defined by the second constraint layer if the behavior of the second constraint layer conflicts with behavior defined by the first constraint layer, but the second constraint layer does not constrain the first constraint layer, wherein the

relation between the first constraint layer and the second constraint layer holds even when the first constraint layer is applied prior to the second constraint layer.

10. (Currently Amended) A server system as recited in claim 9, wherein constraint layers can be selectively added ~~or removed from~~ to the constraint hierarchy independently of other layers in the multi-layer application to produce different sets of constraints.

Claims 11-16: Canceled

17. (Currently Amended) One or more computer-readable media comprising computer-executable instructions that, when executed, implement a computer software architecture on one or more computers, the architecture comprising:

a constraint hierarchy of multiple constraint layers, each constraint layer containing a set of one or more constraints that constrain operation of an application, the constraint layers ~~being organized~~ include each of the following, which are hierarchically arranged from highest priority to lowest priority:

a constraint layer that contains legally mandated constraints to constrain operation of the application according to legal principles;

a constraint layer that contains company-mandated constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of a company that operates the application;

a constraint layer that contains customer constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of customers;

a constraint layer that contains cultural constraints to constrain operation of the application according to cultural aspects; and

a constraint layer that contains end user constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of an end user,

wherein the constraint hierarchy is constrained so that ~~within the constraint hierarchy such~~ that a first constraint layer limits a ~~second~~ lower constraint layer but the ~~second~~ lower constraint layer does not limit the first constraint layer; and

a constraint resolver to resolve the constraint layers so that operation of the application is constrained by a set of the constraints in the constraint layers, wherein the constraint resolver is configured to reconcile any conflicts among constraints imposed by different constraint layers.

18. (Currently Amended) The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 17, wherein constraint layers are selectively added to ~~or removed from~~ the constraint hierarchy to form different sets of constraints on the operation of the application.

Claims 19- 23: Canceled

24. (Currently Amended) A method implemented on one or more computers comprising:

storing a hierarchy of constraints, each constraint being configured to constrain operation of a server application, wherein the constraints in the hierarchy have different respective priorities associated therewith; and

evaluating an operation of the server application in view of the hierarchy of constraints to modify operation according to the constraints in the hierarchy,

the constraint layers ~~are organized~~ include each of the following, which are hierarchically arranged from highest priority to lowest priority:

legally mandated constraints to constrain operation of the application according to legal principles;

company-mandated constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of a company that operates the application;

customer constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of customers;

cultural constraints to constrain operation of the application according to cultural aspects; and

end user constraints to constrain operation of the application according to preferences of an end user,

within the hierarchy to provide a relation between a first constraint and a lower-priority second constraint such that the first constraint precludes behavior defined by the second constraint if the behavior of the second constraint conflicts with behavior defined by the first constraint, but the second constraint does not constrain the first constraint, wherein the relation between the first constraint and the second constraint holds even when the first constraint is applied prior to the second constraint.

25. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 24, further comprising adding ~~or removing~~ constraints ~~from~~ to the hierarchy to alter the server application.

Claim 26: Canceled

27. (Currently Amended) A method for operating a server application, comprising:

receiving requests from multiple clients;

processing the requests to produce replies;

structuring the reply to define how the reply will appear when presented at the client; and

constraining said structuring according to a hierarchy of plural constraints to customize appearance of the reply, wherein the constraints in the hierarchy have different respective priorities associated therewith, wherein the constraints are organized within the hierarchy to provide a relation between a first constraint and a lower-priority second constraint such that the first constraint precludes behavior defined by the second constraint if the behavior of the second constraint conflicts with behavior defined by the first constraint, but the second constraint does not constrain the first constraint, wherein the relation between the first constraint and the second constraint holds even when the first constraint is applied prior to the second constraint, the constraints comprising ~~one or more of~~ each of the following, which are hierarchically arranged from highest priority to lowest priority:

legally mandated constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to legal principles;

company-mandated constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to preferences of a company that operates the application;

customer constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to preferences of customers;

cultural constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to cultural aspects; and

end user constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to preferences of an end user.

28. (Currently Amended) A method as recited in claim 27, further comprising adding ~~or removing~~ constraints to change the set of constraints being applied to the structuring of the reply.

29. (Currently Amended) One or more computer-readable media comprising computer-executable instructions that, when executed, direct an application server to:

generate replies in response to client requests; and

structure the replies according to a hierarchy of constraints to customize the replies, wherein the constraints in the hierarchy have different respective priorities associated therewith, wherein the constraints are organized within the hierarchy to provide a relation between a first constraint and a lower-priority second constraint such that the first constraint precludes behavior defined by the second constraint if the behavior of the second constraint conflicts with behavior defined by the first constraint, but the second constraint does not constrain the first constraint, wherein the relation between the first constraint and the second constraint holds even when the first constraint is applied prior to the second constraint, the constraints comprising ~~a combination of one or more~~ each of the following constraints, which are hierarchically arranged from highest priority to lowest priority:

legally mandated constraints to constrain appearance of a reply according to legal principles;

company-mandated constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to preferences of a company that operates the application;

customer constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to preferences of customers;

cultural constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to cultural aspects; and

end user constraints to constrain appearance of the reply according to preferences of an end user.

30. (Previously Presented) A server system as recited in claim 1, wherein the constraints are expressed as metadata.

Claim 31: Canceled

32. (Previously Presented) A server system as recited in claim 1, wherein the constraints define presentation aspects of a reply sent to a customer.

33. (Previously Presented) A server system as recited in claim 1, wherein each constraint layer represents a different source entity that customizes the application.

34. (Previously Presented) A server system as recited in claim 9, wherein each constraint layer represents a different source entity that customizes the application.

35. (Previously Presented) The one or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 17, wherein each constraint layer represents a different source entity that customizes the application.

36. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the hierarchy includes multiple constraint layers, and wherein each constraint layer represents a different source entity that customizes the application.

37. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 27, wherein the constraints are associated with a hierarchy having multiple constraint layers, and wherein each constraint layer represents a different source entity that customizes the application.

38. (Previously Presented) The one or more computer-readable media of claim 29, wherein the hierarchy includes multiple constraint layers, and wherein each constraint layer represents a different source entity that customizes the application.

Claims 39-50: Canceled